The Presidential Concession Speech:

How Candidates Manage Defeat in an Era of Growing Partisan Polarization

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Abstract

Commonly explored in the discipline of political science, partisan polarization is an inherently discursive phenomenon that is ripe for rhetorical analysis. This study investigates how political candidates manage the polarization surrounding the electoral process by focusing on the concession speech, which is a ritualistic and highly emotional rhetorical event. Specifically, I examine two contrastive cases of speeches delivered in low and high polarization contexts: respectively, the concession speech of Walter Mondale (1984) and that of Hillary Clinton (2016). In this essay, I show how Mondale, engages in image-maintaining rhetoric while Clinton removes herself from the context and makes numerous appeals to her supporters to uphold their partisan movement, even as both candidates cope with the challenges of polarization. My rhetorical analysis reveals that each speech acts as a unique model for managing polarization, in addition to reaffirming the the role of the concession speech as a genre with major significance in the electoral process.

Introduction

Polarization is not a new phenomenon in politics. The increased salience of polarization in contemporary discourse within the political arena over the past two decades has resulted in an increase in attention from rhetorical, electoral, and public opinion scholars in the past two decades. As polarization has deepened over time, its effects have become more pronounced. For example, a 2012 study found that, when compared to the 1960s, partisans hold significantly more negative perceptions about each other, are likely to view members of the other party as less intelligent, and express more concerns about their children marrying an individual from the other party (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012). Similarly, a growing body of literature among political psychologists has noted that the partisan identity has become increasingly linked with a person's individual identity, dramatically increasing the social costs of voting behavior (see, e.g. Kahan, Peters, Dawson, & Slovic, 2013; Kunda, 1990). The spillover of ideological polarization into affective polarization is indicative of a serious problem for democracy in the United States, yet scholars are still uncertain as to how far these polarizing attitudes have spread in politics. Although polarization has been studied with respect to geography, religion, ideology, and partisanship (see, e.g. Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Bafumi & Shapiro, 2009; Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, 2008), this study focuses only on the latter due to its relevance to presidential rhetoric.

The concept of partisan polarization is still contested in the scholarly literature, but two key components to the definition have emerged. First, partisan polarization conceptually involves greater alignment between the political ideology and the partisan label of most voters. Several studies have shown that, in addition to there being clear differences in the policy positions *between* the two major parties, there is more policy homogeneity *within* each party (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Dimock, Kiley, Keeter, & Doherty, 2014; Fiorina et al., 2008; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009). In other words, the predictive power of party identification on policy preferences or candidate choice is so strong that the likelihood of a liberal being a Democrat and conservative being a Republican is over 90 percent (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2014).

Second, the concept of polarization also reflects the clustering of the ideological preferences of partisans at the poles of the spectrum. Abramowitz and Saunders (2008) use data from the American National Election Survey (ANES) to show how the ideological overlap between Democrats and Republicans has shrunk over time. Similarly, a 2014 Pew Research Center study has found that the median ideological position of Democrats and Republicans has migrated farther away from the ideological center in the past decade (Dimock et al., 2014). This same ideological shift has not necessarily been reflected in the policies offered by each party. In other words, although the ideological gap between the policies of the two major parties has not gotten more extreme (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Fiorina et al., 2008), the alignment between party and issue has (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998; Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009). Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope (2008), however, contest the claim that the ideological preferences of voters have gotten more extreme, arguing that effects of partisan sorting (i.e. more ideological homogeneity within each party) confound traditional measures of ideological position on the liberal-conservative spectrum (Fiorina et al., 2008). More research is needed to determine whether the migration toward ideological extremes is real, or whether this claim is simply a misinterpretation of available data (Hetherington & Weiler, 2008). Regardless, as Westfall, Van Boven, Chambers, and Judd (2015) posit, the quantitative measures of partisanship are not as important as the perceived polarization among members of the public, found in qualitative differences in policy positions between Democrats and Republicans. Between these two components, partisan polarization can be understood as the growth in cleavage between the two parties in areas such as ideology and policy preferences.

Several studies on political polarization using ANES data point to the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 as a pivotal election for the modern increase in ideological polarization. Abramowitz and Saunders (1998) argue that the policies of the Reagan administration resulted in a major demographic shift toward the Republican party, an increased awareness of the differences between the main parties, and a general ideological trend toward the ideological poles of the respective parties. Bafumi and Shapiro (2009) corroborate this finding, noting that the trend in ideological polarization had been declining since

the 1950s, but began to tick upwards again following the election of Reagan, whose political ideology had been quite salient during his electoral campaign. Issue-based polarization is common during and after this period (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998; Abramowitz & Saunders, 2005; Bafumi & Shapiro, 2009), though some scholars are cautious to claim that it was the Reagan election of 1980 in particular that sparked the modern polarization trend (Baldassari & Gelman, 2008). Indeed, some studies also find that polarization had been occurring before the 1980 election (eg: Abramowitz & Saunders, 2005; Westfall, Van Boven, Chambers, & Judd, 2015), but significant upward trends in perceived and real polarization occur around in the two years prior to and after the election (Miller & Schofield, 2003; Westfall et al., 2015). Additionally, studies show that all elections subsequent to the 1980 election have seen an increase in polarization from the one prior, save for the 2000 election (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2005). Overall, however, the general trend in polarization has been overwhelmingly positive (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998; Abramowitz & Saunders, 2005; Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Bafumi & Shapiro, 2009; Miller & Schofield, 2003; Westfall et al., 2015).

Yet, the heavy reliance on data and statistics to shed light on polarization ultimately misses a crucial component to the equation. Scholars cite different moments in political history that have contributed in a significant way to the polarization of politics in the United States, and common to all of these moments is the centrality of discourse in shifting the public mood. As noted earlier, the party alignment shift during the Reagan era was the result of increased salience of the policy differences between the two major parties, a process aided by the public electoral campaign (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998; Bafumi & Shapiro, 2009). Other scholars mention Pat Buchanan's 1992 speech at the Republican National Convention, which "declared a culture war for the soul of America," contrasting Democratic and Republican moral positions (Fiorina & Abrams, 2008; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009). Many of these historical explanations for growing polarization center on the realignment of the political parties, which are often prompted by the rise and fall of different political candidates. We can deduce, therefore, that polarization is a product of political rhetoric and is continually shaped by the discursive interactions between elites, the mass public, and the media.

This study investigates the question of how political candidates manage the polarization surrounding the electoral process, focusing on the concession speech as a ritualistic and highly emotional rhetorical event within this process. More specifically, I sample the concession speeches by Walter Mondale (1984) and Hillary Clinton (2016) to shed light on the ways in which polarization has seeped into the political process. This study builds on the work of Rhodes (2014) and Rhodes and Albert (2017), who propose a theory of Bipartisan Posturing wherein candidates are more likely to employ rhetoric that seeks to transcend partisan conflict in times of high polarization. Although a seemingly counterintuitive proposal, they reason that candidates perceive a smaller likelihood of alienating potential voters through partisan rhetoric in times of low partisan conflict and will therefore make greater use of this rhetorical style (Neiheisel & Neiber, 2013, in Rhodes & Albert, 2017; Rhodes, 2014). In a context of high partisan conflict, they continue, moderates are more likely to feel alienated from government institutions and political parties, making partisan rhetoric a greater liability for candidates (*ibid.*). In the interest of electability, then, "presidential candidates might seek to use their public rhetoric to distance themselves from their political parties, in order to foster a public image appealing to the many citizens who express preferences for conciliation and compromise across the partisan divide" (Rhodes & Albert, 2017, p. 568).

Their studies provide strong evidence for the theory of Bipartisan Posturing, at least among Democrats, with evidence showing that the quantity of partisan rhetoric declines in times of high partisan conflict which, during the same time, is replaced by its bipartisan counterpart (Rhodes, 2014; Rhodes & Albert, 2017). In times of low partisan conflict, the data show that Democrats engage in more aggressively partisan rhetoric (Rhodes & Albert, 2017). By contrast, Republicans appear to forego partisan rhetoric in all contexts and instead default to conciliatory rhetoric (*ibid.*). However, because the these studies relies on content analyses as their methodology, they are liable to miss numerous instances of partisan rhetoric that can be found in semantic meaning of the language and the relationship between the text and the context in which it is situated. In this study I rely on rhetorical analysis to uncover the deeper meaning in Walter Mondale's 1984 concession speech and that of Hillary Clinton in 2016 which cannot be divined from a simple search of the text. More importantly, I argue that the types of rhetorical

strategies employed by candidates in speeches to manage polarization are heavily dependent on the socio-political context surrounding the speech. Specifically, the low-polarization context of Mondale's speech reduces the appearance of polarizing rhetoric while the polarizing rhetoric found in Clinton's speech, albeit submerged under a more conciliatory tone, is the product of a highly-polarized political climate.

The Power of Rhetoric to Unify and Divide

To modern scholars, it is practically axiomatic to suggest that rhetoric has the ability to alter emotions and sentiments within people. Early rhetorical philosophers noted the importance of the pragmatic functions of rhetoric in their early treatises on the matter. Aristotle, in the *Rhetoric*, advises the orator to pay special attention to the affective role of his speech in persuading his audience toward a particular goal, "you must put your hearers into the corresponding frame of mind" (Aristotle, 2004, p. 77). Commenting through Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, Plato argues that the rhetoric is the "art of enchanting the mind" (Plato, 2005, p. 47) in that it functions to move the spirit and the intellect into action. To presume that rhetoric is only persuasive or that it is only built on affective arguments is erroneous; rather, these are but a few of the forms which rhetoric takes, both of which have the power to alter the emotional state of the audience.

One of the ends toward which rhetoric can be directed is to unify the identity of an audience. Several scholars have pointed to the genre of apology as a particularly well-suited case study for the power of rhetoric to affect perceptions of unity among groups (Brooks, 1999; Cunningham, 1999; Villadsen, 2008). More specifically, Koensten and Rowland (2004) argue that atonement rhetoric as a subgenre of apologia is the most representative of a unifying form of apology. Rather than simply focusing on image restoration as the primary function of the apology, a rather self-centered function, atonement seeks "to confront the wrongdoing in the public arena and to purge guilt in order to repair the relationship with the wronged party" (p. 71). Whether the case is centered on official apologies for inappropriate actions during World War II toward Jews on behalf of the Danish Government (Villadsen,

2008) or toward the Japanese by the British Government (Cunningham, 1999), or whether the orator is seeking reparations for historic injustices by the governments, like the case of slavery in the United States (Brooks, 1999), each scholar has concluded that, when performed genuinely, these apologies serve to repair and improve the relationship between the two parties involved. The form of apologia most similar to atonement, according to Downey's (1993) typology, is "self-sacrifice" apologies, or those that direct "the responsibilities and commitment of others in the future" through "explanation, ethos-building, and defiant resignation" in order to seek "truth and justice" (p. 52). This subgenre, however, does not contain the remorse or repentance that is characteristic of atonement and so cannot fulfill the healing function that atonement seeks, a necessarily unifying outcome (Koensten & Rowland, 2004). While the unifying power of apology may be limited only to this sub-genre of atonement, it is nonetheless a strong example of the unifying potential of rhetoric.

Of course, unifying rhetoric is not limited only to apology; many other rhetorical devices are available for orators to use in order to create unity. The former president Barack Obama's rhetorical strategies in 2008 provide such examples, with numerous analyses highlighting the importance of rhetoric in constructing and shaping the identity of a crowd of supporters (Brown, 2010; Terrill, 2009). Noting the tensions between his multifarious identities and those of the crowd at his inauguration, Brown (2010) argues that "Obama's speeches emphasize a common theme in American literary romanticism: the unification of opposites" (p. 389). Falling in step with other pieces of presidential address, the performative nature of the inaugural speech in particular requires Obama to construct a unified audience that is reconstituted from the splintered factions of the election. Obama has proven to be particularly skillful in this regard, calling upon both his black and white identities to unify these seemingly disparate groups. Terrill (2009) argues that, in "presenting his own doubled body as a metonymy for the divided, yet whole, body politic" (p. 369), Obama implores his audience "to recognize our 'common stake' in one another, and to experience the sometimes uncomfortable sensation of seeing ourselves through their eyes (p. 374). In this way, Obama's rhetoric primes his audience for empathetic understanding of different perspectives and gives legitimacy to each identity in turn, bringing the two distinct groups closer in a

sense. Although a more complex rhetorical maneuver in both cases of apology and the construction of an audience's identity, it is quite evident that the ends of rhetoric can be directed toward unification.

In addition to the power to unify, rhetoric, too, has the power to create divisions, perhaps most simply by alluding to or explicitly calling out different group identities. Politicians employ this tactic very frequently, speaking to men or women; whites or people of color; rural citizens or urbanites; the working class or the 1 percent; Democrats or Republicans. Increasing the salience of these identities by framing issues in absolutes or fallacious either-or dichotomies has massive power to divide citizens. The ability for the rhetor to divide people along different identities is at its most powerful when there are clear and distinct sides or positions to take: "Conflict framed as a struggle, between two groups – one side, malicious and brutal, bent on stealing or ruining; the other side, nobly determined to protect what is rightfully theirs – is just the sort of thing to set ethnocentrism to work" (Kinder & Kam, 2009, p. 41). Ethnocentrism, so defined, is insidious in the forms it takes and the ease with which it can be employed in political rhetoric. Robison and Mullinix (2016) argue persuasively that, when polarizing rhetoric is employed, and identities and values are made salient, people can become less trustworthy of the other group and, consequently, more intensely support their own group. As has been shown earlier through contemporary, the ethnocentric brand of division can lead to a devolution of a polity into fractioning groups that spells danger for a democracy.

There is, indeed, a tension between unity and division in ethnocentric political rhetoric, where the rhetor seeks to construct a singular group of the total population by situating them in opposition to another group. King and Floyd (1971) note this tension, defining rhetorical polarization as "the process by which an extremely diversified public is coalesced into two or more highly contrasting, mutually exclusive groups sharing a high degree of internal solidarity in those beliefs which the persuader considers salient" (p. 244). Using Nixon's rhetoric surrounding the Silent Majority as a case study, they argue that rhetorical polarization is carried out through two primary strategies. First, the rhetor selects "images that will promote a strong sense of group identity," a process which can either be predicated on social group identities or on shared values or ideals (*ibid.*). Nixon employs the phrase "Silent Majority"

to give an identity to a select group of Americans with diverse sociocultural identities, but feel that the government has forgotten about their plights. What makes this case so unique and powerful is that, rather than relying on the existing, disparate identities to try to cobble together a base of support, Nixon gives life to a new identity and creates "the illusory consciousness of a common identity among many traditionally hostile groups" (King & Floyd, 1971, p. 247). Second, an other is constructed and placed into opposition with this group through a systematic destruction of its credibility, what King and Floyd (1971) call "a strategy of subversion" (p. 244). Though arguably unsuccessful in this venture, Nixon situates the Silent Majority opposite the "Radical-Liberals," a group which he characterizes as young, Democratic, aggressive vagabonds. He also rhetorically draws upon contextual events, like juxtaposing his supporters to the stone-throwing protestors outside one of his conventions, in order to make the divisions more real to his audience (King & Floyd, 1971). The conjunction of the two strategies as one singular rhetoric of polarization is, consequently, a powerful mobilizing force that arises from the establishment of difference.

Such a distrust for out-group members can be leveraged by orators who seek to sway people to their cause and can be found not just in contemporary American political rhetoric, but in early speeches as well. Harpine (2001) provides a telling illustration of polarized rhetoric through the oft-analyzed 1896 "A Cross of Gold" speech by William Jennings Bryan as a source text. Using ethnocentric distinctions between the West and the East, the rich and the poor, and the farmer and the city dweller, "Bryan accented the conflicts within the nation, not its unity" (Harpine, 2001, p. 297). Harpine (2001) characterizes Bryan's rhetoric as radical, a form that engages techniques such as "flag issues," which are defined as "issues that agitators use to polarize the public" (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 1993, p. 34). As a speech intended to win him the Democratic nomination, Bryan rests his case on the key issue of the use of silver coinage as currency and employs polarizing rhetoric to coalesce support for his candidacy. "Flag issues" and other techniques are employed in order to get supporters to "abandon the middle course and make a commitment to one side or the other" (Harpine, 2001, p. 295). In employing this divisive rhetoric,

Bryan manages to gather enough support from the Democratic delegates and win the nomination, using these divisions to construct a unified base of electoral support (*ibid.*).

In a more contemporary context, George W. Bush also uses the strategy of "flag issues" during the 2004 election, particularly surrounding the issue of terrorism following the 9/11 attacks. The centering of the campaign along this issue would divide the public into those who support the War on Terror and those who do not (Foster, 2006). Similar to Bryan in his nominating contest, George W. Bush wins the general election, with exit poll data showing the highest percentages of support for Bush coming from those who were either in favor of his War on Terror or believed him to be more capable of handling the conflict than his opponent, John Kerry (*ibid.*). In both cases, the rhetorical construal of the electoral contest in a divisive manner helped to build support for the candidate and his platform. The disquieting potential for rhetorical polarization to subvert compromise on policy issues is particularly concerning for a democratic society. In political speech, the concession speech offers us an excellent point of departure for understanding the extent and degree of rhetorical polarization, particularly because of their timing in the socio-political context, coming almost immediately after the conclusion of an emotionally charged electoral contest.

The Concession Speech as a Rhetorical Genre

The presidential concession speech has not been studied as a genre distinct from other political rhetoric until relatively recently. Many scholars have focused their analyses on the use of rhetoric during the campaign process (see, for example: Murphy, 1992; Rowland et al., 1984) and during the presidency itself (see, for example: Campbell & Jamieson, 2008; Crockett, 2003; Denton, 2000; Hartnett & Mercieca, 2007), not to mention the large literature that has been devoted to the study of inaugural addresses (see, for example: Campbell and Jamieson, 1985; Stuckey, 2015). Marginal scholarly attention has been paid to the rhetoric during the transition between campaign and presidency, a crucial period in which the nation recovers from the lengthy struggle between the political parties, candidates, and the

media. Because this period in time appears to mark the only break in the continuous campaigning that has come to define American politics, an issue made all the more prevalent by the increased presence of digital media in the everyday lives of citizens, this area merits more attention from rhetorical scholars to understand how politicians reconstruct the events of the campaign in a way that continues the democracy that has paved the way for its existence.

Weaver (1982) makes the first scholarly foray into the discussion of victory and concession speeches as a political ritual, analyzing speeches from 1952 to 1980 for rhetorical and contextual patterns. She emphasizes the reciprocal nature of the victory and concession speeches while placing more emphasis on the mechanics of the speech rather than the functions behind them (Weaver, 1982). Building off of Weaver's (1982) work, Corcoran (1994) proposes that, rather than simply being a "ceremonial gesture," the concession speech is "an integral, legitimating feature of a presidential election" (p. 115). Therefore, he argues, the theater surrounding the defeat of a presidential candidate is ritualistic in its content, form, and themes (Corcoran, 1994). Using eleven concession speeches from the presidential elections between 1952 and 1992, he seeks to explain how the candidate, within the confines of a genre that is defined by a tightly regulated ritual, turns their "defeat into a semblance of victory" for their audience (p. 111). He identifies four primary features of the speech: a congratulatory remark to the victor of the election, an appeal to unity, an exhortation of democracy, and a call for their supporters to continue the struggle (p. 115). Ritter and Howell (2001), based on a more extensive survey of additional concession speeches, add to the list of generic concession speech features the following two items: "transformed roles for candidates" (typically moving from the role of a defeated candidate to the leader of a loyal opposition) and "thanking supporters" (p. 2316).

Extending this typology into the context of the speech, Corcoran (1994) notes that the speech occurs as the middle piece of what he calls the "rhetorical triad" of the election (p. 113). In this sense, the speech follows calls by the news media for a concession after the results of the election have been announced and occurs prior to the acceptance of victory by the winner (Corcoran 1994; Weaver 1982). Although he indicates that these elements appear in roughly the same order throughout the speeches he

surveys, these factors are merely descriptive for the genre rather than being prescriptive (Corcoran, 1994). This perspective suggests that the violation of any of these expectations with respect to timing or sequence may not be particularly consequential to the acceptance of the speech by the public. However, this does not preclude a violation from reflecting a larger, contextual issue, particularly if the violation goes beyond simply reordering the production of the aforementioned elements.[1]

From a dramaturgical perspective, the processes of presidential campaign and election serve several consummatory functions for the actors involved, one of these being legitimation (Gronbeck, 1984). More specifically, the repetition of certain behaviors or rituals allows them to gain a normative power over time. As the rituals ensconced in these acts become normalized with each passing cycle, minor breaks in tradition may be interpreted as major gaffes. Through this lens, the concession speech marks the concluding scene of the multi-act presidential campaign that has been gone through pre-primaries, primaries, conventions, the general election contest, and the election itself (Gronbeck, 1984). Welch (1999) similarly argues that these ritualistic speeches perform an essential, legitimizing function to a democratic society and serve as a way to bring unity back to a nation that has been divided over a bitter campaign.

Were a candidate to exclude a ritualistic component of the speech, such as a congratulatory remark to their opponent or, more extremely, to forego the concession speech altogether, it may appear socially that the victory has not yet been legitimized, even when, legally, it has. Willyard and Ritter (2005) provide a useful example of this issue in their review of the 2004 concession speeches, which were significant due to their departure from the traditional expectations of the genre in several respects. Beyond the notable difference in length between the concession speech of John Kerry and the victory speech of President George W. Bush, they argue that the fact that the vice presidential candidates

[1] The generic qualities are only applicable to the loser between the two major party candidates, not third-party candidates, whose speeches Neville-Shepard (2014) argues make up an entirely different genre altogether based on the nature of third parties within the United States. He posits that the goal of these speeches, unlike traditional concession speeches, is to violate the conventions of political discourse in order for the issues on which they have campaigned to make some amount of impact on the electoral victor before the third-party candidate fades once again into political obscurity (Neville-Shepard, 2014).

delivered speeches prior to their running mates and the clear difference in tone between the speeches of Democratic vice presidential candidate and John Edwards and the presidential candidate John Kerry "changed the dynamics of the concession ritual" (Willyward & Ritter, 2005, p. 489). Although the speeches fulfill the other criteria of the genre as explicated by Corcoran (1994) and Ritter and Howell (2001), violations of generic expectations for the speeches prompted little more than some surprised commentary by the news media (Willyard and Ritter, 2005). Based on the media and public reaction to the speeches, it is reasonable to conclude that the generic violations did not provoke a social legitimation crisis, though that does not exclude the possibility that more extreme violations would.

Indeed, a contemporaneous example from the 2016 election provides strong evidence for this claim. During the third presidential election, Republican candidate Donald Trump stated that, if he did not win the election, he would refuse to concede (Healy and Martin, 2016). This statement sparked a massive barrage of stories discussing its implications as the general public was highly uncertain about the legality of such a maneuver. All sources acknowledged that, while a concession is not a legal requirement in the transfer of power, failing to concede would raise questions of the legitimacy of the vote among his supporters and the public in general (Ellis, 2016; Melber, 2016). Although a small sample of media pieces cannot substitute scholarly research on public opinion in terms of rigor or robustness, it can be taken as a proxy for public opinion, suggesting that a failure to concede would be socially problematic. Taken together, then, although the genre is not necessarily rigid in its form, the presence and absence of each component of the speech are important in determining its success in the eyes of the public.

Artifacts of Study

The texts I have selected for analysis are Walter Mondale's 1984 Presidential concession speech and Hillary Clinton's 2016 Presidential concession speech. Certain parameters constrained the choice of speeches for this analysis, including the available literature on partisan polarization; the findings of these

studies on the shape and changes of polarization over time; the complexities of the primary versus general election concession process; and the differences in rhetorical styles between Democratic and Republican presidential candidates.

The principle choice dictating which speeches to study was the level of partisan polarization in each rhetorical situation. In order to determine whether there is indeed a difference in polarization management techniques based on context, it was essential to find two speeches with markedly different levels of polarization. Later considerations, though equally as consequential, narrowed the scope of this study to these two speeches, namely that the speeches were limited to concessions given during the general Presidential election, rather than during the Presidential primaries. Many scholars have shown how primary elections contribute to partisan polarization in the United States (Abramowitz, 2008; Cohen et al., 2008; Hirano, Snyder Jr., Ansolabehere, & Hansen, 2010; McGhee, Masket, Shor, Rogers, & McCarty, 2013). Because of the structure of primaries and delegate voting, party elites are able to narrow down the candidate field through the power of endorsement and its effect on voting behavior (Cohen et al., 2008). Similarly, it is the party elites that drive the partisan choosing of presidential candidates, not the voters (Abramowitz, 2008). McGhee, Masket, Shor, Rogers and McCarty (2013) argue that it is the combination of these two factors, that is, the nomination structure and elite partisanship that contribute to ideological polarization during the election. One study by Hirano, Snyder Jr., Ansolabehere, and Hansen (2010) finds little correlation between primaries and extreme polarization, though this study focused on Congressional races, so the applicability to the presidential primaries is questionable. Moreover, the data found in the studies affirming the relationship between primaries and polarization are not easily generalizable to the entire nation because of the disparate characteristics of the two voting populations. Primary voters as an aggregate group are typically more ideologically extreme than general election voters (Abramowitz, 2008; McGhee et al., 2013) and so cannot be said to reflect the views of the nation. By consequence, any concession speeches made during presidential primaries were excluded from consideration for the paper in order to focus in on the theme of national polarization.

A final criterion for selecting the speeches research was the partisan identity of the candidate who made the speech, with the goal of keeping this identity the same between the candidates (both Democratic candidates or both Republican candidates). A 2017 study on the development of partisan rhetoric over time argues that Republican and Democratic campaigns employ different rhetorical strategies to achieve the same ends (Rhodes & Albert, 2017). They argue that this divergence in rhetorical strategies, although having declined in recent years, are a reflection of each party's values and can be seen in how parties frame different political issues (p. 575). Benoit (2004) similarly finds a qualitative difference in the campaign discourse of Democratic and Republican presidential candidates, where each party tends to emphasize issues that they "own" (e.g. Democrats "own" education policy while Republicans "own" national security policy) and frames these issues in value statements that appeal to their respective electoral bases. He concludes his study with the sweeping claim that, "political party affiliation, an important attribute of these message sources, systematically influences the nature of presidential campaign messages" (p. 92). Since the sample in this study was limited to only two speeches due to time constraints, the purpose of maintaining consistency in the partisan identity of each speaker is essential to identify more concrete patterns of polarization over time. In the following sections, I situate each speech within its socio-political and discursive context and then engage in a close textual analysis to uncover the ways in which each candidate manages the contextual polarization.

Walter Mondale and the 1984 Presidential Election

Historico-political context

Most evidence suggests that the 1984 election occurred in a context of very low polarization. Perhaps the best evidence can be found in the results of the election, where Reagan won 58.8 percent of the popular vote to Mondale's 40.6 percent and swept the electoral college in every state except Minnesota and Washington, D.C., a grand total of 525 electoral votes to 13 (Abramson, Aldrich, & Rhode, 1986, p. 67). Exit polling data of vote choice shows a similar pattern of unified support for

Reagan. Mondale only won significant amounts of supports from the unemployed, Blacks, Hispanics, the Jewish community, and people in large cities, losing significantly in almost every other demographic category (Abramson et al., 1986; Pomper, 1985b, p. 67-68). Even among Democrats, Mondale only earned 73 percent of the vote, with 26 percent of Mondale's fellow party members voting for Reagan. By contrast, 92 percent of Republicans voted for Reagan (*ibid.*). Analyses show that, compared to the previous election, the Republican share of the vote in nearly every demographic category increased by five or more percentage points (Pomper, 1985b, p. 69). These data suggest that the American electorate was largely unified behind Reagan in this election. ANES data used in polarization studies show similar results: compared to years prior, 1984 actually shows a decline in the amount of polarization between liberals and conservatives (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008). Had there been a more polarized atmosphere, these data would have presented a more even division between the vote share for the candidates within each demographic group or, alternatively, a clear demographic alignment behind one candidate over the other, rather than every category being consistently and easily won by one candidate.

The 1984 election was marked by minimal polarization at the presidential level and nearly none at all at the congressional level, thanks in part to the democratization of the nominating contests (Paulson, 2000). Where, in decades prior, candidates had been chosen by elite party members, a process which risked candidates receiving weak electoral support, the development of primaries and caucuses turned the process into issue-centered affairs (*ibid.*). Rather than being boosted by connections to key party leadership, candidates in this new primary system need to unite the party under a single ideological vision, leading to more ideological homogeneity and allowing for the rise of more ideologically extreme candidates who are able to win early in the process (*ibid.*). The nominating contest for Republicans was quite straight forward, with Reagan standing strong as the flag bearer of the new conservative vision (Pomper, 1985a). By contrast, Democrats were divided among three main candidates, Walter Mondale, Jesse Jackson, and Gary Hart, and, though Mondale managed to clinch the nomination, many party members were not satisfied with the choice (*ibid.*). The vision emerging out of the Democratic party after the nominating contest was, however, quite weak, leading to a broader support for Reagan.

In the general campaign, the primary focus was on the state of the economy, an issue which 49 percent of voters stated as being the most important issue to them (Abramson et al., 1985, p. 166). Having been a primary issue in the 1980 campaign that pushed Reagan to victory, the massive growth in the economy over his first term after a short period of continued recession made the issue an easy subject to campaign on for Reagan once again. Rather than trying to deny the strength of the economy, Mondale was forced to make only minor differentiations between his policies and those of Reagan, which only added to the latter's strength in the polls (Plotkin, 1985). Recalling the pain of the declining economy during Carter-Mondale years, voters were reluctant to embrace any policies by Mondale that were seen as a return to that administration and easily backed Reagan on the issue (Henry, 1985). As such, Reagan was able to focus the campaign primarily on this issue and Mondale, instead of raising new issues, was forced to attempt to cast the policy outcomes of the current administration in a negative light, a task that was evidently not very successful (Pomper, 1985b).

One of the other key issues in the campaign was foreign policy, with 34 percent of the electorate citing either defense or foreign issues in equal numbers as the most important issue in the campaign (Abramson et al., 1986, p. 166). In the first years of his presidency, Reagan was facing several major foreign policy issues that played a role in the election, including U.S. involvement in an ongoing conflict in Lebanon and the backing of Sandinista rebels in El Salvador, not to mention the lingering fear of nuclear war (Ryan, 2017). With the memories of failed efforts in Korea and Vietnam in the decades prior, Reagan was forced to tread carefully in the realm of foreign intervention to maintain popular support and was generally successful in this regard, though Mondale made several strikes at his policies during the campaign (*ibid.*). Reagan, however, managed to divert attention away from foreign policy issues and frame the election as a referendum on his economic policies, a move which helped him to gather a bipartisan base of support.

In the 1984 campaign, both candidates moved toward the ideological median on many issues in order to appease a larger number of voters (Pomper, 1985b). This explains, in part, the relative unity of the public in electing Reagan. However, political scientists persuasively argue that Reagan did not win a

mandate because of his policy positions, evidenced by a decline in the share of seats in Congress that were held by Republicans between 1982 and 1984 (Pomper, 1985b). Moreover, an analysis of the position of each candidate on different policies relative to the general public shows that the public was roughly halfway between the positions of Reagan and Mondale (Abramson et al., 1986). This finding implies that, when it came to the issues, neither candidate was in a more advantageous position than the other. Rather, scholars give more credence to the idea that Reagan was a more emotionally popular candidate than Mondale, providing a strong sense of optimism toward the future of America compared to the "doom and gloom" rhetoric that Mondale employed throughout the campaign (Plotkin, 1985).

Beside the issues, the media, too, displayed relatively minimal amounts of polarization, contrasting to the rhetoric of some of the candidates. In his discussion of media coverage as a political issue, Stempel (1991) notes that there is the tendency for candidates to disparage the media and conflate its biases during tight elections. The 1984 election was less contentious in this respect than in years prior due to the consistently large margins by which Reagan was expected to win (*ibid.*): public opinion data from the entirety of the 1984 campaign showed Reagan holding a double-digit lead over Mondale (Pomper, 1985b, p. 71). The candidates and parties shared a similar perspective on the role of the media in the election, only pointing primarily to two issues that they felt the media had blown out of proportion. For the Democrats it was the issue of Geraldine Ferraro's finances and, for the Republicans, it was Reagan's performance in the first debate (Stempel, 1991).

Following her selection as the Vice-Presidential nominee, Ferraro, like many other national candidates, promised to release both her and her husband's tax return to the public for scrutiny (Henry, 1985; Pomper, 1985b). Although Ferraro herself released her returns without issue, her husband, on the other hand, initially declined to release his personal returns, causing the media and the public to speculate that there was something to hide (Blumenthal, 1984; Shribman & Jackson, 1984; Dolan, 1984; Atkinson 1984)**.** Even though the controversy was abated after the information was released, scholars speculate that this event dulled national enthusiasm for a female candidate (Pomper, 1985b) and, as Mondale (2010) notes in his memoirs, diverted valuable campaign time away from the important issues.

While the finance problem seemed to only hurt the Democratic ticket, Reagan's poor performance in the first debate simultaneously decreased his favorability and boosted the image of Mondale (Abramson et al., 1986; Pomper, 1985b). Pomper (1985b) recounts the first debate as being a resounding triumph for Mondale, during which Reagan was unable to defend his policies against Mondale's pointed attacks and, in the closing arguments, admitted to being "confused" and gave "a rambling statement, cluttered, with statistics, as if he were a college student who had crammed too much for a final exam" (p. 76). The performance, poor by objective standards, was taken up by the press to be a massive gaffe by Reagan's typically strong debate performance (*ibid*.). Reflecting this general perception of Reagan's weakness, public opinion polls showed that his support dropped nearly five percentage points, though this dip lasted only for a week or so until the second debate in which he performed markedly better (Abramson et al., 1986; Pomper, 1985b, p. 71).

Despite partisan claims to the contrary, especially surrounding these gaffes, several studies argue that news media coverage of the candidates and the election was relatively balanced in the 1984 election, both in terms of valence of the stories and in their coverage of each party. Stempel and Windhauser (1991) performed and in-depth analysis of stories from 17 well-known American newspaper sources that were published between Labor Day and election day in 1984 and found that coverage for all candidates was significantly more favorable than unfavorable toward the candidates, with a favorable-unfavorable margin of greater than two to one for the presidential candidates (p. 15). Additionally, in the aggregate, both the volume and valence of coverage was relatively equal for Democrats and Republicans, though the study notes that some news sources tended to cover one party more than the other or were more critical of one and not the other (Stempel & Windhauser, 1991, p. 20). While, for most newspapers, coverage was focused primarily on the race and the progress of the campaign, there was still substantial coverage of the issues, particularly the economy, war, defense, and diplomacy (*ibid*., p. 66). Results from a similar study on network television coverage from the three major broadcasting stations (ABC, CBS, and NBC) corroborate this finding: coverage of candidates was mainly centered on the candidates and the campaign, rather than discussing any of the issues (Windhauser & Evarts, 1991). The study also finds that Reagan

accrued a notably greater volume of television coverage when compared to Mondale, though the authors cite the incumbency advantage and his personality as the cause of this imbalance rather than there being a partisan bias of the media (Windhauser & Evarts, 1991, p. 93). In this regard, then, the news media does not necessarily exacerbate the polarization during this election cycle, even if it does reflect the totality of the campaign in terms of issue coverage. Between the issues of the campaign and the media coverage thereof, we find strong evidence that there was a minimal amount of polarization during the election.

Descriptive Analysis

As is typical of contemporary concession speeches, Mondale opens by telling the audience that he has completed the ritualistic task of congratulating the victor on his success. He then begins the process of conceding by making a series telegraphic statements, "He has won. We are all Americans. He is our president, and we honor him tonight" (Mondale, 1984). The pithiness of each statement, their bare-faced simplicity, heightens the impact of each on the audience and emphasizes the finality of the matter. While the first three ideas are indeed factual statements, the fourth, being delivered so near to the others, acquires a similar factual tone. Rather than describing the actions of the event, the final statement almost acts as a command to audience: tonight, we do not lament the failure of our campaign, we respect the victor's duly earned success. In this way, Mondale turns the attention of the speech away from himself and toward Reagan, obliging his audience to put the loss behind them and gather behind the the president as he enters into another term.

Mondale works next to validate the results in the eyes of his supporters, who may otherwise believe that the election was not won fairly. He cites American community institutions, basic in their conceptualization, and elevates them to be key sites of democracy by juxtaposing these simple places with the importance of the actions that took place in in those spaces: "the American people in town halls in homes, in firehouses, in libraries, chose the occupant of the most powerful office on Earth" (Mondale, 1984). It is through his exhortation of democracy that he works to finalize the results of the election and move forward to the next stage of history.

In the next paragraph, he again raises the importance of democracy to an almost religious status, using the verb "rejoice" to exalt the actions of the voters: "we rejoice in our democracy, we rejoice in the freedom of a wonderful people" (Mondale, 1984). It is important to note, however, that here and in several other points, he emphasizes the temporal aspect of the celebration, placing it only in the present moment, "*tonight*, we rejoice," "we honor him *tonight*," "Again, *tonight,* the American people" (Mondale, 1984, *emphasis added*). By qualifying these sentiments and restricting them to a certain period of time, Mondale seems to be allowing his supporters to have those feelings of disappointment, which he earlier tells them to rid themselves, but only after the ritual has been fulfilled.

Mondale extends his valorization of democracy into the following paragraph where he thanks the people who have participated in the election, using the metaphor of the legal system to make his point, "I thank the people of America for hearing my case" (Mondale, 1984). The beginning of the metaphor can be found in the previous paragraph where, when talking of the outcome of the election, he says, "We accept their verdict" (Mondale, 1984). Pairing the election to the image of a court case, Mondale implicitly presents the idea that the "verdict" of the people is the serving of justice, inasmuch as his own loss is justice. Yet this "we" that he is using here is not a collective "we" that integrates himself with his supporters. Instead, it is a very impersonal "we" that is made up of an intentionally vague body of people. By keeping his audience general, he allows the members of the audience to connect to his message as they see fit; if his supporters do not want to accept the verdict, they do not have to because they are not necessarily brought into the "we" he sets forth. He does not accept defeat on his own behalf, but merely as a spokesman for his supporters in the face of the other team that has claimed victory or, continuing with the legal metaphor, a lawyer on behalf of his client.

His ingratiation to the American people and of his family and staff only appear to mask the fact that the campaign was very much focused on him, as seen throughout the entirety of the paragraph: "They've listened to *me*, they've treated *me* fairly, they've lifted *my* spirits and they've added to *my* strength" (Mondale, 1984, *emphasis added*). Where Mondale is the focus of the campaign, the people to whom he is referring do not appear to be the audience present at his concession either. The "they" that he

is referencing is the mystical "people of America," a vague term that suggests that this admission of defeat is less for the audience and more for himself, a reassurance that his loss was not as massive as it may appear to be. In this respect, Mondale's speech serves two functions: to fulfill the ritual of concession for the American public, and to bolster his own spirits in the face of monumental defeat. The use of hyperbole works to minimize the feelings of defeat as, in several places, he scales the magnitude of the event to larger proportions than can be contained by the national political system, "the American people...chose the occupant of the most powerful office on Earth," "this is a magnificent nation with the finest people on Earth," "I have traveled this nation, I believe, more than any living American" (Mondale, 1984).

Mondale also makes wide use of the image of politics and elections as battles as if to hide the fact that the outcome of the election was all but certain before the voting began. He first introduces this metaphor after his brief period of thanks, saying, "We didn't win but we made history, and that fight has just begun" (Mondale, 1984). Remarkable about this phrasing is that, instead of fighting for a set of values, he makes the implication that politicians and voters are truly fighting for history. Additionally, he makes repeated references to the idea that the election is not the conclusion of some movement, but only the beginning, "the fight has just begun" (Mondale, 1984). Later, in the tenth paragraph, he says again, "Do not despair, this fight didn't end tonight, it begins tonight" (Mondale, 1984). What these images suggest is the view that the election is a rebirth of a movement. Mondale makes this image all the more powerful with a metaphor relating defeat to seeds, "I've been around for a while and I have noticed in the seeds of most every victory are to be found the seeds of defeat, and in every defeat are to found the seeds of victory" (Mondale, 1984). Seeds are commonly used as a symbol for new life and for yet-undetermined potential; the death of his campaign provides the perfect soil in which a new movement can grow. Following the plant metaphor, then, the path toward victory is upward, through growth. In mentioning both the seeds of defeat and the seeds of victory, he presents to his audience two implicit options: you can either let the seeds of defeat germinate and consume that which has lived before it, or

you can tend to the seeds of victory and let them grow into a new opportunity. He signals to his audience that the latter is the better option: "Let us fight on, let us fight on" (Mondale, 1984).

Strangely, though, he weakens his suggestion in the next sentence by saying, "My loss tonight does not in any way diminish the worth and importance of our struggle" (Mondale, 1984). Rather than framing the election as a fight in this instance, he diminishes the valence of the event to a struggle, as if there is something pressing upon them and preventing their movement from moving onward. It creates an image of weakness or, at best an equality in power between the two sides instead of the movement having the strength for victory. Perhaps this is an acknowledgement of the complex battle he faced when was making the campaign, the seemingly insurmountable odds that were against him and his campaign. Additionally, instead of inspiring continued efforts, Mondale appears to wallow in the outcome, citing the outcome specifically as a "loss." Later, in the same paragraph, he states, "Tonight, tonight especially I think of the poor, the unemployed, the elderly, the handicapped, the helpless and the sad, and they need us more than ever tonight" (Mondale, 1984). Through this sentence, it appears as if the outcome of the election has almost automatically resulted in the occurrence of the bad things that he warned of in his campaign. Now that it is over, now that Reagan has officially won reelection, those people are most certainly going to be worse off than they would have been had Mondale been successful.

However, instead of conveying an outlook of hopelessness, he positions his campaign and his supporters as being valuable individuals who can still make a change. Even though they have not won the election, they are not immobilized; they can still effect change at the smallest level and make great things happen (though Mondale again leans into hyperbole to re-inspire confidence in his supporters "the best education that any generation ever had"). Mondale here rehashes some of the issues of the campaign, stating, "Let us fight for our environment and protect our air, our water, and our land" (Mondale, 1984). Beside this being the most explicit references to disagreements between his and Reagan's policies, in the next paragraph, he makes a subtle, yet more powerful dig at Reagan's foreign policy, saying of the military, "Let's use that strength to keep the peace" and of nuclear proliferation, "control these weapons before they destroy us all" (Mondale, 1984). In this, he is making his final argument for his campaign

policies, since it has now been concluded and been done with. He frames these issues as what has been central to the campaign, saying, "That has been my fight, that has been our fight in this campaign" (Mondale, 1984). Interestingly, this is the first instance where he makes a direct reference to the inclusiveness of the campaign. Instead of it being his own campaign, centered around him and his ideas, Mondale finally suggests that the work that was put into it was a collective effort, or at least was made up of collective ends. Perhaps, however, this is a token gesture of inclusion, as later on, he returns to the idea that he alone was at the center of the campaign, saying that his supporters "permitted me to wage this fight," and that "I gave it everything I've got" (Mondale, 1984).

The inclusiveness that may have been suggested in that phrase does not last, however, as he returns to the personal focus of the campaign toward the end of the speech. He marks the conclusion of his campaign with the statement, "And I'm at peace with the knowledge that I gave it everything I've got" (Mondale, 1984). The language of being "at peace" provides for the metaphorical death for his campaign and, by extension, his candidacy. The dramatic nature of this statements makes it appear as though he is portraying himself as a martyr for his political causes: the struggle of the election in which he bared his values for the public eventually overwhelmed him, killing his candidacy. Mondale continues with this imagery in the next sentence as he says, "I am confident that history will judge us honorably, so tonight let us be determined to fight on" (Mondale, 1984). The phrasing here serves two key functions. First, Mondale seems to imply that history will remember the efforts of the people in the campaign as being righteous, even if they were not successful. Their efforts were not in vain, or at least were not meaningless, as history will look kindly upon them. Yet the second meaning that is implies with the use of the word "will" must be understood in union with the rest of the phrase. The sentence as a whole can be taken as a rallying cry before a battle to the death; we can feel comfortable continuing our fight because we know that history will remember our struggle and look favorably upon our efforts, no matter the outcome. Do not give up, he suggests, for you will always be remembered for your efforts.

His farewell is composed of the typical sentence that seeks to heal the grieving nation, "God bless you, and God bless America" (Mondale, 1984). The phrase gives the audience the idea that they are

taken care, just as the nation is, by a benevolent person above. All will be right in the end, for there is God who is watching over you and your actions, as well as the actions of the government and the nation. The overall weakness of Mondale's speech is acceptable in this low-polarization context, as his rhetorical maneuvers are more centered on maintaining his political image rather than attempting to unify an already strongly unified nation.

Hillary Clinton and the 2016 Presidential Election

Historico-political context

Because we are barely over a year past the election, there is a dearth of information that can provide a clear picture of what happened during the election, making it difficult to definitively assert the causal factors of polarization during the 2016 election. It may ultimately take one or more election cycles to gain a comprehensive understanding of voting behavior during the election. Therefore, this analysis rests on the preliminary data that are currently available. The claim, however, that the 2016 was a highly polarized election is supported strongly by aggregated exit poll data (Prysby, 2018) which show that 89 percent of Democrats voted for Clinton and 90 percent of Republicans voted for Trump (Pomper, 2018, p. 66). Independent voters, who composed nearly 33 percent of the electorate during this election, broke 42 percent for Clinton and 48 percent for Trump (*ibid.*). The data on ideological voting patterns show similar results, albeit with much weaker relationships as individuals not "bound" by party labels cast their vote for third party candidates. Only 84 percent of liberals voted for Clinton, as did 52 percent of moderates, while 81 percent of conservatives and 41 percent of moderates voted for Trump (*ibid.*). If the election were not as polarized as people claim it be, we would expect numbers for the partisan and ideological bookends (Democrats and Republicans, and liberals and conservatives, respectively) to be smaller for the corresponding candidate. As such, polarization in the election was present at both the ideological and the partisan level.

Pundits and scholars alike have offered competing explanations for the outcome of the election and its relation to the polarized atmosphere of the election without coming to a conclusion. The most common explanation offered is that Trump tapped into the economic dissatisfaction of blue-collar and poor citizens to win the election. Prysby (2018) notes that, although the economy was experiencing modest growth during Obama's second term, the manufacturing sector was losing jobs to new technologies or to factories abroad that, coupled with growing income inequality, resulted in a dim perspective on the economic future of America for the working class. He argues that the anti-trade policies offered by Trump, embodied by the slogan "Make America Great Again," resonated among these voters in ways that Clinton and other Republican's policies had not (Prysby, 2018).

Exit poll data, however, shows a more complex story than the economic dissatisfaction explanation suggests. Clinton won 52 percent of the votes from individuals with incomes under $50,000 with an 11-point margin over Trump (Pomper, 2018, p. 66). Even if we look at the data for voters with incomes between $50,000 and $100,000, Trump only won these groups by a margin of four points (*ibid.*). When these groups are intersected by race and religion, a more comprehensive picture is revealed, as Trump won sweeping majorities among white working-class and Protestant/Evangelical voters (Pomper, 2018, p. 68). With issues of race and immigration at the center of the Trump campaign, Abramowitz (2017) notes that racial cues have a stronger explanatory value than do economic and class-based explanations, though the latter are nonetheless important. Citing ANES data, he notes that racial resentment, which he defines as "subtle feelings of hostility toward African Americans," has grown dramatically and steadily over the past forty years, especially among white Republicans (Abramowitz, 2017, p. 203). As such, there is more agreement "between racial and partisan attitudes among white voters" (p. 205), meaning Republicans are more likely to have attitudes of racial resentment than are Democrats.

Rapoport and Stone (2017) corroborate this finding, noting that the hardline anti-immigration policies espoused by Trump were favored by a strong majority of Republicans, even by those who did not initially support him during the nominating contest. A statistical analysis of ANES and exit poll data

done by Abramowitz (2017) leads him to conclude that racial resentment was the best predictor of support for Trump, second only to party preferences. Byler (2017) offers a different way to frame similar results, suggesting that education level is the best predictor of increased support for Trump and Republican policies between 2012 and 2016. He posits that less of education is correlated with lower economic success and, as supported by Abramowitz (2017), greater racial resentment (Byler, 2017). Noting the absence of complete data, he concludes that, to some degree, economics, culture, and race are all explanatory mechanism behind Trump's rise to power (*ibid.*). In essence, the outcome of the election indicates a fear among whites of losing cultural status in the U.S. (Mutz, 2018).

Yet polarization along racial lines is not the product of the 2016 election itself, nor even the elections prior. Rather, it is the culmination of nearly six decades of party realignment as the historic New Deal coalition that defined electoral politics for decades fades out of existence. As explored earlier on, the union of white Southern Democrats and racial minorities began to crumble during the 1960s as the economic benefits gained from the alliance were no longer sufficient for Southern Democrats, or Dixiecrats, to override their discomfort of working toward social progress for African Americans (Paulson, 2000). Between 1968 and 1996, these Dixiecrats began to shift their allegiance to the Republican party, driven by divisions along cultural and economic issues, while the Democratic party simultaneously gained more non-white voters (Abramowitz, 2017). Pomper (2018) argues that the driving force of this shift was the emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity in the country over on economic issues by Democrats, was also a primary reason for Clinton's loss in the 2016 election.

While party realignment is partially responsible for long-term trends in polarization, more immediate factors were present that contributed to the growth in polarization between the 2012 and 2016 elections, most evidently in the form of media use and development. The traditional forms of campaign media, namely television advertisements and campaign spots, were present in like most other campaigns, but took on some notable features during this election. Public opinion research has shown that an advantage in media coverage and advertising is typically associated with a corresponding gain in the polls (Sides & Vavreck, 2014). As a 2016 study determined, the Clinton campaign was the top advertiser in

terms of money spent and ads aired during both the primaries and the general election, so one would expect to see a consistent boost in polling (Fowler, Ridout, & Franz, 2016). The study, however, notes that only 30 percent of the total amount of advertising done by her campaign focused strictly on policy, whether that came in the form of explaining her own policies or contrasting her policies with Trump's (*ibid*., p. 459). Fully 60 percent of her advertising focused solely on Trump's character or personality, the majority of which were extremely negative in tone (*ibid*.).

These advertisements possibly contributed to the growth in polarization during the election as the *ad hominem* advertisements activated motivated reasoning attitude structures in conservatives, serving only to increase support for Trump. As explained by Kunda (1990), motivated reasoning is a form of bias wherein an individual, perceiving cognitive dissonance toward a behavior that conflicts with one or more attitude structures an individual has, will bias their reasoning to reduce the dissonance and reaffirm their choice. Nyhan and Reifler (2010) note that individuals can use a variety of strategies in order to fit their behavior into preexisting attitude structures, even in the face of what appear to be rational and logical arguments. While the Clinton advertisements may have had reasonable points, the significant attitude investment Trump supporters have made in their candidate resisted attitude change, despite numerous scandals over the course of the election (the *Access Hollywood* tapes, for example), in order to avoid making the costly decision to reevaluate their choice. Additionally, because the majority of her advertisements were devoid of policy arguments, there were few arguments present that would have bolstered her case in the face of opposition or would have provided an alternative that undecided voters could support.

More salient, however, was the rise of social media and the corresponding growth of "fake news" during the election. Allcott and Gentzkow (2016) define the phenomenon as "news articles that are *intentionally* and *verifiably* false, and could mislead readers" (p. 213). They speculate that the general decline in trust toward the mass media to "fully, accurately, and fairly" report the news, particularly among Republicans, both produces and is a product of fake news (*ibid.*). A 2017 Pew Research Center study shows that, between 2016 and 2017, the gap in partisan trust in the news media grew from 12 points

to 23 points, with Democrats having higher amounts of trust, although their 2017 value is only 34 percent (Barthell & Mitchell, 2017, p. 13). Trump has exacerbated this trend through his rhetorical delegitimization of the formal press over the course of the campaign and has catalyzed the rise of social media as an alternative source of information (Owen, 2017). This trend is most noticeable in the 35-point drop between 2016 and 2017 among Republicans who believe that "media criticism of political leaders keeps them from doing things they shouldn't," a drop that corresponds with a 47-gap between Democratic views on the same question (Barthell & Mitchell, 2017, p. 5). What these data show is that the 2016 election not only polarized the media from the public in general, but it politicized the media to the point where it is now perceived by some to be a tool of one party or ideology.

The change in public perception of the media cannot be pinned on Trump and his campaign alone, for actions by the media itself have contributed to the rise in fake news and its own discreditization. Owen (2017) notes that the majority of voters (80 percent) received news about the election from television, while 50 percent received news from online news sites and only 36 percent from print sources (p. 168). Although legacy news organizations like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* maintained a high standard of journalistic integrity, she argues, cable news treated social media posts as the main sources for stories, allowing the unverified news coverage about the election to be quickly and dramatically distorted (Owen, 2017). The role of social media in the process cannot be understated either: fake news websites accrue 41.8 percent of their entire traffic from social media, highlighting the importance of social media in the spread of misinformation (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2016, p. 222). With nearly 45 percent of the public accessing election-related news via social media platforms (Owen, 2017), Allcott & Gentzkow (2016) estimate that fake news pieces were spread to nearly 37 million people. While fake news could be innocuous in isolation, the rapid dissemination of these stories related to blatant lies about the election played into individual's preexisting attitudes about the other candidate and further solidified their dislike for the other party (Owen, 2017). In conjunction with the emotionally-driven campaigns of each candidate, the presence of media misinformation and motivated reasoning contributed

to a highly contentious and polarized political context. Clinton's speech is interesting because she is faced with a situation in which she has to mediate this polarization or risk potential social upheaval.

Descriptive Analysis

Starting first in the fourth paragraph, and continuing throughout the rest of the speech, Clinton presents herself as the embodiment of the loss of the election, not just the loss for herself as a candidate, but for her supporters, the Democratic party, and, as she believes, the nation as a whole. She first claims the loss as her own, saying, "Last night, I congratulated Donald Trump and offered to work with him on behalf of our country" (Clinton, 2016). She, as the sole person who passed on the message of congratulations to Mr. Trump, did so in the name of the entire country. This action and the statement of it in her speech fulfills the first rhetorical expectation of the genre. Unique to this speech, however, is the degree to which Clinton embodies the loss. In the same paragraph, while acknowledging the collective disappointment of her supporters and campaign workers, pins the blame for the loss on herself, going so far to apologize for the loss, "I'm sorry that we did not win this election" (Clinton, 2016). Her rhetoric in this line is consistent with the functional expectations of the ritual of the concession speech, one of those being to heal a nation that has been broken by the campaign and the electoral process. The terms in which the apology is framed parallels that which is used in condolences for a grieving friend; in this way, Clinton is at once the source of the pain and the provider of comfort. While she successfully fills the role that is expected of her by the political ritual, she does so in a unique manner, that is, through an apology, something that only one of her predecessors has done before. While John Kerry used apologized in his 2004 concession speech, saying "I'm sorry that we got here a little bit late and a little bit short," (qtd. in Willyard and Ritter, 2005, p. 496), he masks the outcome, that is, the loss of the election, in metaphorical language, as if he is distancing himself from the results. Clinton, on the other hand, wholly embraces the loss as her own and states it bluntly to her audience.

This singular blame exists in stark contrast of the plurality of her campaign which, through the use of "we" throughout the opening section, suggests that the campaign was not a singular endeavor of which she was the head, but something constructed in the collective and embodied in her candidacy. She positions herself as the embodiment of democracy, the candidate who has been chosen to represent all those who share the same values and vision for the nation. She is not a candidate for the Democratic Party, but "your candidate, the "You [who] represent the best of America" (Clinton, 2016). The audience she is referring to in this line is not, like she suggests earlier, all Americans, but those who have supported her and the values she claims to uphold. The phrasing "best of America" alludes to one of the earlier lines she used in her campaign where she called half of Mr. Trump's supporters "deplorables." It is this group of people whom she most explicitly leaves out of her constructed audience, though she also intends to exclude the vast majority of Republican voters or, in the most general sense, those who did not vote for her, considering her apology is directed at those for whom the election was a loss "for the values we share and the vision we hold for our country" (Clinton, 2016).

In the sixth paragraph, Clinton reprises her role as the comforter of her grieving supporters and the broken nation, giving voice to the disappointment of her supporters and validating their concerns, "I know how disappointed you feel because I feel it too" (Clinton, 2016). Although she acknowledges the pain and anger people are feeling at the result of her loss, she contrasts these feelings with love and hope, reminding her audience that it was those values upon which they built up the campaign. Rather than asking her audience for forgiveness, she implores her audience to carry those positive values into the future as the nation enters a new era that she will not be leading.

It is in this moment which she first addresses the question of division and polarization, "We have seen that our nation is more deeply divided than we thought" (Clinton, 2016). Yet she is not afraid for the future; embracing the hope that she speaks of earlier on, she says, "But I still believe in America and always will" (Clinton, 2016). To her supporters, she tells them not to dwell on the result, which will exist only in the past, but to turn to the future and prepare for what is ahead, using the language of obligation to strengthen her claim, "We owe him an open mind and the chance to lead," and grounding it in the values

of the constitution, "Our constitutional democracy enshrines the peaceful transfer of power and we don't just respect that, we cherish it" (Clinton, 2016). By rooting the foundational American document in the language of obligation, Clinton elevates the unity of the polity over the victory of a candidate or a party. Even though this section is an exhortation of democracy that falls within the scope of the genre, it adopts a more forceful, warning tone that can be interpreted as addressing the polarized context that she explicitly refers to only moments earlier. Here, too, she is presenting an argument to her supporters that they must move forward peacefully with the results, even if they were not what was hoped for. Buried in the argument is the idea that rejecting the peaceful transfer of power is both disrespectful to the democratic tradition that binds the nation and is nearly un-American. Those who choose to reject these values, she suggests, can no longer consider themselves to be American.

This idea is also turned on Donald Trump and his followers, to whom she gives a sharp warning about other important constitutional values that his campaign glossed over or seemed to ignore, namely, "the rule of law, the principle that we are all equal in rights and dignity, freedom of worship and expression" (Clinton, 2016). She caps her reiteration of American democratic values with the statement that "we must defend them" (Clinton, 2016), speaking not necessarily to all Americans, but specifically the Trump administration. It is at this moment that she first employs the metaphor of war and battles in relation to democracy and politics, a theme that will continue throughout the rest of the speech and directly contrast the image of a campaign of "love" and "hope" that she speaks of earlier. Clinton then presents this metaphor of the battle for democracy and values to her audience, telling them that "our constitutional democracy demands our participation, not just every four years, but all the time" (Clinton, 2016). The word choice of "demand" signals to her audience that there is almost an obligation put on them to be active in their democracy; our compliance is essential to ensure that these values remain salient and protected.

In order to recall the unity of the campaign, she highlights important issues that defined her campaign, specifically ones that are distinctly opposed to those of Trump and his campaign, "making our economy work for everyone not just those at the top, protecting our country and protecting our planet and

breaking down all the barriers that hold any American back from achieving their dreams" (Clinton, 2016). In this call for unity, she uses clear imagery to highlight her point, namely the phrase "breaking down all the barriers," which presents a direct affront to division. While she is calling for the destruction of division or removing the impediments to our unity that constrain all people, she has in her mind certain people that have been held back by these barriers, which she lists later on, "for people of all races and religions, for men and women, for immigrants, for LGBT people, and people with disabilities" (Clinton, 2016). Even though she is making these group identities salient, pointing out those groups that are vulnerable to being overlooked (though some more implicitly than others), she points out that these people, the people who made up her campaign, are indeed unified in their goals. These people who want to participate, who want to achieve their dreams, do not speak for themselves but, through her campaign speak "with one voice...for everyone" (Clinton, 2016). This metaphor again calls to attention the unity of her campaign and the idea that the campaign was about Clinton speaking for many people, but many people speaking as one through Clinton.

After she concludes her recalling of the campaign and the important issues, she transitions away from the past and looks to the present, saying, "So now, our responsibility as citizens is to keep doing our part to build that better, stronger, fairer America we seek. And I know you will" (Clinton, 2016). Through her use of the phrase "responsibility," she turns away from the forceful language of "demands" used earlier in the speech to a more conditional, softer concept. However, the emphasis on the phrase "as citizens" compensates for the softened language to suggest that there is a duty that comes with being a citizen of the nation, such as what she listed prior. More importantly, when the phrase is considered as a whole, "our responsibility as citizens," her inclusive use of the pronoun "our" serves to lower her status in the eyes of the people from the candidate, back down to being an ordinary citizen. When she extends this idea to the phrase "to keep doing our part," she is asking her audience, her supporters to continue this campaign that was started over a year and a half ago. It is the point in which she acknowledges the death of her candidacy, but not the death of the movement as she implores, even challenges her supporters to continue the struggle for their vision of America with the words, "And I know you will" (Clinton, 2016).

The transition to the singular "I" from the many "we"s that have dotted the previous sentences marks a shift in persona as the true, vulnerable Hillary Clinton makes an appearance for her audience. Such a short, simple sentence shows her emotional attachment to her audience and reflects how deep her faith in the American spirit is. Clinton marks her candidacy as officially over when she says, "I am so grateful to stand with all of you" (Clinton, 2016). The phrase epitomizes the idea that she was not the campaign itself, but only a part of what was built by others, an almost egalitarian position. Rather than "standing before" or "standing behind" them, she positions herself in the midst of everyone, no more or less important than any other citizen. It is at this moment where she, Hillary Clinton, is no longer the candidate for office, but only a citizen with an interest in politics.

The moment of vulnerability she shows in these short phrases, however, is quite fleeting, as she then turns to the more ritualistic section of thanking specific groups of people who have been with her on the trail. This ritualistic section, though, still captures the inclusive imagery that Clinton has used throughout the speech so far, thanking her running mate Tim Kaine and his wife "for being our partners on this journey" (Clinton, 2016). She signals here, perhaps more explicitly than in earlier places, that the campaign is not her own, but a collective effort. Mr. Kaine was not solely her running mate, but a person who helped the campaign and the popular vision that it was inspired by. He is the partner of the people, not of Clinton.

The respect of unity she displays here is affronted by the comment that "Tim will remain on the front lines of our democracy" (Clinton, 2016), another instance in which democracy and politics takes on the image of a battle or war. In the metaphor, the two parties are adversaries with competing ends, rather than one single body working toward a collective goal for the nation. This image stands in stark contrast to the "everyone" that she was referring to earlier. Additionally, when speaking of the Obama's, she thanks them for their "graceful, determined leadership," a phrase that can perhaps be interpreted as a dig at Trump who was perceived by many Democrats to embody none of those characteristics. A second slight toward Trump appears in the same sentence as Clinton recognizes the value of the Obamas' work "to so many Americans and people across the world" (Clinton, 2016). The implicit emphasis on the

cosmopolitan nature of Obama's policies and style of governance is in contrast to the insular nationalist views that Trump espoused throughout his campaign. Both insults, though implicit, reveal the general Democratic dislike for Trump and directly contrast Clinton's earlier call to allow Trump "an open mind and the chance to lead" (Clinton, 2016).

After thanking her family, Clinton then turns her thanks to the on-the-grounds members of her campaign, speaking to them directly for the first time by saying, "You poured your hearts into this campaign" (Clinton, 2016). This phrasing here indicates a subtle shift in audience. Where she previously is presenting the idea that everyone who supported her campaign was a part of the campaign, she here begins to name specific groups of people that were deeply embedded in the campaign. This distinction is between electoral supporters and core supporters, suggesting that there is a greater value in the people who were active in the campaign than those who simply voted, congruent with the idea she espouses early, telling people to be involved more than just once every four years.

Additionally, over the course of the paragraph, she continues to narrow down the audience until it reaches the individuals, saying "I want each of you to know you were the best campaign anybody could have ever expected or wanted" (Clinton, 2016). Here she is making an effort to personally thank everyone on the campaign, even if she is not able to do so in the physical sense; the rhetorical individuality substitutes the personal version. The function of this narrowing of the audience is both a way to express sincere gratitude and to motivate each person who worked on her campaign to continue the efforts into the future; their work has not gone unnoticed and is valuable, even in failure. She continues to emphasize the ephemeral nature of her candidacy and role in the movement, noting that, for some people, "it was a campaign after you had done other campaigns" (Clinton, 2016). Taking in conjunction with the use of the word "anyone," Clinton places her candidacy as only a short part of what is to be a movement that is both past and future. She makes her appeal more explicit by saying humorously of the serious issue of social media anonymity and Facebook secrecy, "I want everybody coming out from behind that and make sure your voices are heard going forward" (Clinton, 2016).

After she concludes her expressions of gratitude to the many people that composed her campaign, she begins her plea to continue the campaign in her absence, bringing more forcefully the metaphor of the battle of politics to the forefront as she notes, "I have, as Tim said, spent my entire adult life fighting for what I believe in. I've has successes and I've had setbacks" (Clinton, 2016). Significant in this sentence is the way she frames the fight, that there is only success or setbacks; there are no failures, for failure is regressive. The language choice emphasizes a forward-facing direction, where one is always looking toward and making progress, a mindset she hopes her audience will adopt, especially when taken in the context of other phrasing she has used earlier on in the speech, such as, "advancing the causes" in the ninth paragraph.

The setbacks, she notes, are not pleasant, but they are not all defining as they can be overcome in an effort to make one's goals a reality, "This loss hurts, but please never stop believing that fighting for what's right is worth it" (Clinton, 2016). Here she makes an explicit reference to the failed campaign, though, of course, she does not frame it as a "failure." It is interesting that she frames it as a "loss," continuing the metaphor of campaigns as a win-lose scenario, which necessitates that there are two opposing and divided sides. The nature of the election as a competition between opposing forces is continued with her language of "fighting." In making the election a "fight for what's right," the opposition must, then, be "fighting for what's wrong." This implication raises the salience of divisions between the two groups, since the other side is presumed to be fighting for the wrong values. Equally interesting is how she uses the word "please" after having used the commanding imperatives earlier on, signaling another break in the persona of the speech to allow the audience another glimpse at the true Clinton. She, however, quickly resumes her political persona as she returns, once again, to the metaphor of war, "we need you to keep up these fights now and for the rest of your lives" (Clinton, 2016).

Clinton next turns her attention to the women who supported her in the campaign, "And to all the women, especially the young women, who put their faith in this campaign and in me, I want you to know that nothing has made me prouder than to be your champion" (Clinton, 2016). This moment seems like a strange disconnect from the collective image of the campaign that she has set up throughout the rest of the

speech: while people did put their faith in the campaign, she also differentiates herself as a different motive of the campaign. almost taking on a savior image, elevating herself. In this sentence, too, she makes another interesting transition in the way she is speaking to her audience, from the more authoritative imperative, to the submissive plea, to the egalitarian direct conversation. As things get more important to her, she becomes more personal in the way that she handles them rhetorically. What is most surprising, however, is that she chooses to refer to herself as the "champion" of women, a seemingly elevated position than what she had stationed herself in earlier. Similarly, as the champion of these people, she fights for them in their place. Now that she has been defeated, however, the people will need to get up and fight for themselves, an action which she has been preparing them for throughout the speech. She wills women to continue forward in their quest for full representation as she says, "I know we have still not shattered that highest and hardest glass ceiling, but some day someone will and hopefully sooner than we might think right now" (Clinton, 2016). Not only do her words serve to inspire women to continue her efforts, they serve as motivation for the campaign to carry on in her absence.

As she wraps up the speech, she reprises the sentiments she has shared with her supporters and her desires that the movement she has taken part of continues to thrive even as she must step away from her role. In a moment of unbridled optimism, she says, "And I still believe as deeply as I ever have that if we stand together and work together with respect for our differences, strength in our convictions and love for this nation, our best days are still ahead of us" (Clinton, 2016). The way she qualifies her beliefs, however, are somewhat strange in light of the rest of the speech where she is implicitly painting the other side as adversaries, not partners or as unified. What this sentence is functioning as, the "we" she to which she is referring, is not the American people, but her group of supporters. She does not direct these healing words to the nation as a whole, but instead to those who have built the campaign, urging them to carry the campaign onwards.

This image of the campaign call continues into the next paragraph where she repeats, for the last time, her campaign slogan, "I believe we are stronger together and we will go forward together" (Clinton, 2016). Most significantly is how she has transformed the slogan of "stronger together," what functioned

as a unifying call, into a call for action with the phrase "forward together." Now that the people have united as one, they must move as a collective voice to advance their vision; the campaign must not stop with the loss of the its face, but can continue on. She closes her appeal with the short, but impactful phrase, "And there is more work to do" (Clinton, 2016). Although she has marked the conclusion of her candidacy very early on in the speech, the closing of the speech does not appear to be a conclusion of the campaign. Instead, she explicitly incites them to engage in those same activities as they enter into a new era. The times may me changing around them as "more seasons [are] to come," but they are still making progress, "And there is more work to do" (Clinton, 2016).

Finally, she wraps up the speech with the ritualistic "May God bless you and may God bless the United States of America" (Clinton, 2016). On the whole, Clinton delivers a very ritualistic concession speech, fulfilling each item of the speech as explicated by Corcoran (1994) and Ritter and Howell (2001). With only minor breaks in the generic expectations based on contextual factors (i.e. the sequence of speech delivery), Clinton works within the bounds of the genre, particularly the appeal to unity and the call to continue the campaign, to manage the highly polarized situation.

Discussion

When situated within the framework of Rhodes and Albert's (2017) Bipartisan Posturing theory, these speeches do not map as neatly onto their paradigm as they would like to assume. The hypothesized relationship between each speech and its context, according to this theory, is a high proportion of partisan rhetoric in Mondale's case due to the low polarization context, and a high proportion of bipartisan, or at least a low proportion of partisan, rhetoric by Clinton to match the highly polarized situation. Instead of this basic relationship of high or low amounts of partisan rhetoric, it would be more accurate to characterize the rhetoric as more overtly or covertly partisan. Moreover, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that one speech can be characterized as more or less partisan than the other.

A nuanced analysis of the speeches will show that, within the various components of the concession speech, each candidate displays different amounts of partisan or polarizing rhetoric.

The context of a highly unified nation in Mondale's case eases the rhetorical demands placed on him as he works to manage the already-low polarization. Following the generic requirements of the speech, Mondale expends the most rhetorical energy on the criterion that involves the exhortation of democracy. His numerous uses of hyperbole with regard to the electoral process and outcome can be interpreted as a strategy to diminish the perceptions of division between the two parties, yet this explanation does not hold its ground when we account for the strong unity the public displayed behind Reagan. Rather, Mondale's hyperbolic exhortation of democracy can be interpreted as an attempt to massage a bruised ego. For someone who has had a long, dignified political career, the massive loss he experienced in the race may have compelled him to engage in face-saving rhetoric.

Such an explanation appears more valid when taken in conjunction with the impersonal distance that Mondale creates between himself and his audience. For example, at a key moment in his speech when talking about the choice of the American people in the election, he makes the statement, "We accept their verdict" (Mondale, 1984). Although he employs an inclusive "we" at several points in the speech, he declines to define this group of people beyond a vague, general allusion to "the American people" (Mondale, 1984). Rather than personalizing his experience of the loss where he acknowledges his defeat outright, he presents this statement as if he is a public representative for the people. Another interpretation of this phrasing would suggest that Mondale is positioning himself as an equal to his supporters, that the loss he experiences is the same as that of his supporters, or perhaps that he is speaking on behalf of his supporters. Yet a mere paragraph later, he is thanking his family and supporters for the fact that "They've listened to me, they've treated me fairly, they've lifted my spirits and they've added to my strength" (Mondale, 1984). The use of "me" instead of "us," the latter of which would have been congruent with previous statements, returns the focus to Mondale and allows him to clearly demarcate a line between himself and his audience. These competitive presentations of his persona imply that

Mondale is attempting to save face in light of a massive defeat, while also performing the expected role of conciliator in delivering the concession speech.

Similarly, Mondale's appeals to unity are weak at best, if not nearly non-existent. Weaver (1982) makes the interesting observation that the "the greater the loss, the stronger the call for 'continued opposition,' instead of unity" (p. 484). Mondale's speech, the speech that ironically came directly after the publication of her research, does not seem to follow this pattern in the slightest. Although he presents his positions to the audience once last time and makes the traditional appeals to continue the campaign, his appeals are surprising lackluster. Had Weaver's (1982) claim held true, with Reagan's massive margin of victory over Mondale in the electoral college and the popular vote, we would expect to see a particularly aggressive call to oppose the new president. This outcome can be explained in part by the general assumption that Mondale was going to lose well before voting actually began. Public opinion polls showed him consistently trailing Reagan by 7 to 18 percentage points during 1984 (Pomper, 1985b, p. 71), so he may have accepted that was going to lose to an extremely popular candidate, therefor reducing the strength of a call to opposition. Welch (1999) argues more along these lines, that "candidates who lost by large margins were ideologically distinct from the winners, and for the losers to promise too much unity after the election would have been to disavow what they had been fighting for during the campaign" (p. 89). Perhaps, however, this point may also be an interesting example of how Mondale was both constrained by and played into the degree of polarization during the time period. Because the public was generally unified in its feelings towards the parties and the candidates, the need to divide the nation over the issues was minimized. Had the context been more divisive or the election contest itself been more contentious, then Mondale may have a delivered a more agonistic concession speech.

Clinton's speech follows this pattern to an even more salient degree, though the outcome of the election was extremely close. In these cases, Welch (1999) expects candidates to call for unity behind the winner because no consensus has emerged. The presence of continued opposition in a time of unity lends itself to the deeply divisive nature of the campaign and the political context. Because she campaigned so

forcefully against Donald Trump, it would have been shocking to her supporters if she made a stronger plea to rally behind him than she already did in her speech. Perhaps the bitterness of losing an election that she had widely been projected to win and the fact that she won the popular vote, but not the electoral college, made her engage in a subtle effort to undermine the legitimacy of Trump's victory.

The only break in the tradition surrounding the speech can be seen in the order of delivery, where Clinton gave her speech the morning after the election, after Donald Trump had delivered his victory speech. Even though she argues that her decision was not made under any insidious pretenses (Clinton, 2017), her position at the end of the electoral sequence can be interpreted as her getting the last word, albeit unintentionally, in which she has the opportunity to contradict the victor's interpretation of events and set the tone of the post-election transition. However, her decision to remain within the bounds of the genre in other ways can be seen as a technique for managing polarization in that, under the circumstances of the election, a speech that breaks the generic expectations could be easily interpreted as playing into the highly polarized context. Instead, Clinton uses the criteria of the genre to deliver a message about the polarized context in more subtle ways, particularly with respect to the following two items: the appeal to unity and the call for a continued struggle.

First, the way in which Clinton constructs her audience over the course of the speech reflects the highly polarized nation. Although she makes numerous appeals for unity behind the president-elect, she, for almost the entire duration of the speech, appears to be speaking only to her dedicated base of support. Rarely does the unified "we" she uses so often extend beyond the group of supporters that have constructed the campaign. When she does, as can be seen in the ninth paragraph when she reflects on the values of the constitution, it is to chide Donald Trump and his supporters. In this way, her appeal to unity is not made to the nation as a whole, but only to those who share her ideology and vision for America, as if it were another campaign speech, rather than one that concludes a campaign. This version of the appeal to unity also reinforces the expectations of ideological homogeneity that is expected by each party and by the campaign, as her discussion of the values of her campaign and the way in which she talks about the construction of the campaign (by the collective efforts of a dedicated, value-driven group of people)

emphasize. Rather than focusing on the shared values of the nation, Clinton returns to the polarized rhetoric of liberal values.

Second, Clinton dramatically expands on the call to continue the struggle of the campaign beyond the generic expectations to the point that it nearly drowns out the ending of her candidacy. By situating herself as only a part of a movement that has existed before her candidacy and will continue to exist thereafter, she alludes to an overarching value system that connects the Democratic candidates instead of a vision that is meant for all Americans. Such a maneuver tracks neatly onto the polarized context which guides the speech, aided in large part by her apology for the loss, which allows her supporters to more easily cut her out of the movement and replace her with another figurehead. Moreover, her continued use of the metaphor of war in relation to the electoral process exacerbates the issue of polarization in that she always employs the metaphor from the view of the offensive combatant, using phrases like "remain on the front lines" and "fighting for" to make her point (Clinton, 2016). By contrast, the she uses the metaphor defensively when referring to Trump, telling her audience to "defend" those campaign values in a new political era (Clinton, 2016). In switching between the defensive and offensive use of the metaphor of war, she implies that the nation cannot fight for democracy on a unified front, but must maintain this ideological struggle for, in essence, moral and immoral policies. The rhetorical strategy of stretching within the confines of the generic expectations allows for the facial presentation of a non-polarized message and cleverly disguises the polarized undertones of her speech.

When we compare the strategies of these two candidates, we see that two different models for handling polarization make themselves evident. Mondale, on the one hand, appears to engage in image-maintaining rhetoric in his low-polarization context. On the other hand, Clinton removes herself from the context in a martyr-like fashion that matches with her appeals to her supporters to maintain their partisan movement, such as required by the highly polarized situation. Her persona is nurturing and apologetic, while his is detached and self-serving. The audiences whom they address are similarly distinct. Mondale interpolates an audience made up of the general public, only occasionally narrowing the audience to his supporters. Clinton, by contrast, almost always speaks to a community audience, one that is made up of

her supporters, rarely addressing the unified American people or her "opponents," save for a few pointed comments. Far from claiming that each speech is archetypical of the types of speeches that would be given in low and high polarization contexts, Mondale and Clinton's respective speeches illuminate the degree to which polarization affects the rhetoric of a highly ritualistic speech. Other explanations besides polarization may lend themselves to the difference between each speech and their external appeal, including Clinton's gender and the fact that both speeches analyzed were produced by Democrats.

Whether polarization is the primary cause of different rhetorical strategies is only of minor import when considering the enduring role that polarization is likely to have in American politics. Little evidence suggests that the nation is moving toward reconciling its differences over key cultural or policy issues in the near future, so it is worthwhile for scholars to consider how rhetors are managing polarization in public discourse. The concession speech presents a highly accessible sample for understanding this phenomenon in that, as the closing movement of the electoral process, the speech allows the country to seek opportunities of political and social renewal. A nation that has cut itself new divisions over the course of the election must be healed, lest it risk an infection of dissent and subversion from which it cannot recover. Where the newly (re)elected president can guide the nation in any direction they choose through their victory and inaugural speeches, the concession speech provides the necessary bandages that heal these wounds and allows democracy to continue on its forward march into an era of new leadership.

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